



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
ALCOHOL, DRUG ABUSE, AND MENTAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

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July 24, 1975

Prof. Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics
Stanford University School of Medicine
Stanford, California 94305

Dear Josh:

Thank you for your letter of July 1 requesting bibliographical data concerning bargaining behavior in connection with hostages. I am just about to leave the office for summer vacation and don't have any references immediately at hand, but my recollection is that there were two recent articles on this topic in the Police Chief (published monthly by the International Association of Chiefs of Police) and the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin. You might also like to call or write Mr. Peter Jaszi who is the Research Director for the National Advisory Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism which has recently been funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and which has its offices at 2139 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007, Tel: (202) 686-3800. Mr. Jaszi's staff has been developing a bibliography on the subject of terrorism and should be in a position to provide you with additional references that will draw on experiences with hostage situations in the United States and in other countries.

Beyond this, you might like to contact Frank Ochberg when he returns from vacation about mid-August. Frank is currently the Director of the Division of Mental Health Service Programs in NIMH and has also been serving on the National Advisory Committee to the aforementioned LEAA Task Force. He was in New York last month for one of this committee's meetings and took part in a full day of training along with field commanders of the New York Police Department in techniques for the handling of hostage situations. As a matter of fact, I would urge that you also write directly to the Chief of the New York City police department and request information about their program and techniques for handling hostage situations. They do have a consultant working with them on the program -- a psychologist or psychiatrist.

I presume, Josh, that you are well aware of the Conference on Terrorism and Terrorists that was sponsored by the Institute for Social and Behavioral Pathology, at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (Stanford), in July of 1973. They do have a conference proceedings which they should be able to send you, if you don't already have a copy.

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Finally, let me give you some of my own brief thoughts on the matter of bargaining with terrorists or offenders in connection with hostages. Since the knowledge and information base, as well as related techniques, pertain to the topic of bargaining, I would imagine that a study of the relevant literature on bargaining might be of some general value. However, I would look for materials which approximate as much as possible the particular sub-set of the bargaining situation of particular concern to you. For example, bargaining in situations of industrial strikes, especially where tensions have gotten very high and there has been considerable polarizing of the issues. More sedate business-type bargaining behaviors might not be of much relevance at all. Also, the variables in the hostage situation are such that much of the available theoretical information about bargaining may not account for too much, other than providing some general background and awareness of some major controlling factors in proximate situations. When faced with a hostage situation (involving terrorists and criminals), I would wish to have available that particular senior police or related official who has actually had experience with these or related situations, who has had several years of field experience and is not primarily an administrator, who has demonstrated through past behavior an ability to maintain a calm manner, clear thinking, considerable patience, and who has a value system in which resort to use of force (or related escalation) is used only as a last resort. Given the especially tense and dangerous situation involved, and given also the likely consequences of errors of judgment, I would not be very comfortable with clinicians, academicians, and theoreticians who have had no experience in such situations -- especially when the lives of others and their own might literally be on the line. It is for this reason that I think of the kind of experienced police official mentioned above, rather than persons with primarily theoretical knowledge.

Of course, there are a wide variety of situations and actors involved in the hostage-taking situation. Clearly, there would be occasions when a particular clinician (e.g., some one who knows, has worked with, and continues to have a reasonably good relationship with the hostage-taker), clergymen, or other such persons might also be quite useful. However, if I were to bet I would go with the person with the most relevant and successful experience in that particular situation, a person quite experienced in dealing with a variety of life-and-death situations of the kind hostage-taking and related criminal and terrorist acts can lead to, and some one with a demonstrated ability to stay cool and yet firm in such extremely tense and volatile situations.


Certainly, a careful study of a variety of hostage-taking situations and episodes, just how they were handled, who were the actors, and what were the outcomes, etc., would seem to be an extremely important piece of research to undertake. Behavioral and social scientists, as well as police

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and related personnel, would seem to be key persons in such a joint endeavor. However, as indicated above, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration is studying the topic. The Police Foundation (located in Washington, D.C.) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police might be other agencies with both interest and some information on the topic.

I trust the above information is of help to you. It has been a long time since we last met and I do miss our periodic meetings and conversations when you were on the NIMH Council. Enclosed are a couple of items that may be of interest to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Saleem', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Saleem A. Shah
Chief, Center for Studies
of Crime and Delinquency

Enclosures